



Emergency Respite Care



Issue Date: August **2000**

NC Health Choice for Children

EMERGENCY RESPITE CARE

Information for Children with Special Needs and Their Parents

Introduction

Like all families, those who have children with special health care needs want the best possible health care for their children. For families with children with special health care needs, this may require many trips to the doctor or specialist, coordination of special therapies or medications, and constant care at home. The responsibility of having a child with special needs can sometimes become overwhelming. It may not be as easy for these families to find someone to care for their child when an emergency comes up. This is where **emergency respite care** under Health Choice can help.

Children with special health care needs enrolled in NC Health Choice for Children may be eligible to receive **emergency respite care**. This benefit is designed to allow families to respond when they have an emergency they need to attend to. Parents may use emergency respite care to take care of unexpected personal matters such as a medical emergency or death in the family, or an unplanned situation in which parents are temporarily unable to care for their child.

We suggest that you read this booklet carefully, perhaps several times. You will then be more familiar with emergency respite care and how it might be helpful to your family. You may want to bring this booklet with you to share with your respite care provider so that you both understand what emergency respite care is and how it works under NC Health Choice for Children.

This booklet has been organized into three sections:

- **Answers to Frequently Asked Questions**
- **Ideas for Making Things Work, and**
- **Important Addresses and Phone Numbers**

ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I know if my child has a special need?

A child may have a special need if a medical, behavioral, developmental, or mental condition or a problem with alcohol or drug abuse is expected to last six (6) months or more.

To find out if your child has a special need, answer the following questions.

1. Is it harder for your child to breathe, eat, dress, bathe, go to the bathroom, talk, or learn than for other children his or her age?
2. Have you been told that your child has a long-lasting (chronic) health or mental health condition?
3. Have you been told that your child has a delay in mental, emotional, physical, or social development?
4. Does your child need special services, special equipment, or drugs for medical, behavioral, or other health conditions?
5. Does your child use or need any developmental disability, mental health, alcohol, or drug services?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, your child *may* be able to receive additional medical or mental health care through NC Health Choice.

Only children with special health care needs are eligible to receive emergency respite care under Health Choice.

What is emergency respite care?

During emergency respite care, a respite care provider will temporarily take over your responsibilities as caregiver. The person usually responsible for caring for the child with special needs is free for a short period of time.

Emergency respite care can be provided in one of three ways.

- A provider you have selected may come into your home, or
- Your child may go to the home of a respite care provider, or
- Your child may go to center-based emergency respite care.

Under NC Health Choice, emergency respite care may be provided for **unplanned** situations in which family members temporarily do not have the capacity to safely care for their child or when changes in their child's health, behavior, or development require in-home or out-of-home temporary support.

Circumstances that would be considered emergency include, but are not limited to the following:

- ✦ An unplanned situation in which the child temporarily lacks supervision or shelter (such as homelessness),
- ✦ A medical emergency in the family, and
- ✦ A death in the family.

This means that emergency respite care cannot be used for planned vacations, or to run errands. It must only be used during **emergency** situations.



How do I get approval for emergency respite care under Health Choice?

If you think your family is likely to benefit from this service, **you must prepare before you need emergency respite care!** There are several steps you must take to make sure you will be able to get emergency respite care when an emergency arises.

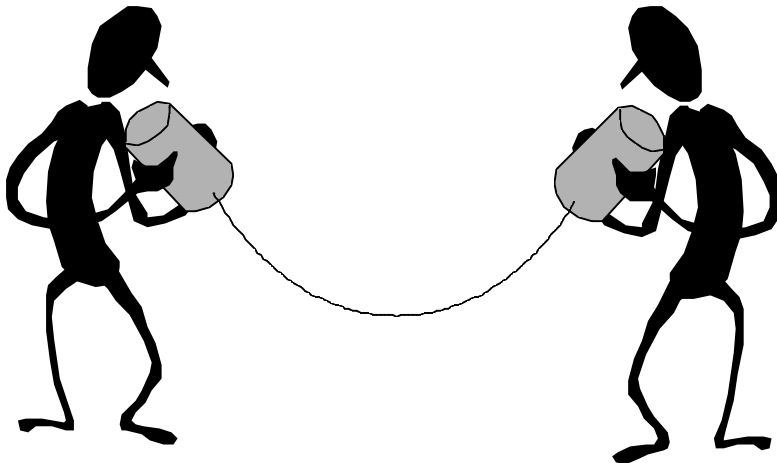
1. First, your child's medical provider should sign and mail in the Special Needs (SN) form certifying that your child meets the Health Choice definition of 'child with special needs'.
(See page 16 for a copy of the form.)
2. Second, if your family feels that you are likely to benefit from emergency respite care you should locate a respite care provider in your community that is able to meet your needs.
(See 'How do I find a Respite Care Provider' on page 5.)
3. Lastly, your family should contact the NC Health Choice Emergency Respite Care Case Manager at 1-800-753-3224 between the hours of 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to register the child*. The Case Manager will enter basic information about your child (name, Health Choice ID number, address, phone number, respite care provider agency) into the client database to make the approval process at the time of the emergency go more quickly.

Once you've completed steps one, two, and three, your child will be registered for emergency respite care.

4. When emergency respite care is needed, your family or respite care provider should contact the Case Manager at 1-800-753-3224 to receive pre-approval. This line is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The Case Manager will review the child's and family's situation and will consider a number of factors, including the impact the child's condition has on a parent's ability to cope and on their ability to provide care. The Case Manager will consider the appropriateness of the service request and treatment plan and will determine approval for emergency respite care as appropriate.

How do I find a Respite Care Provider?

You may call our Special Needs Helpline, 1-800-737-3028 anytime between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday to get the names and phone numbers of respite care providers in your area.



How do I choose the right respite care provider for my family?

Respite care agencies vary from community to community. It will be important to talk with the provider you select about your child's needs and about the services the agency will provide. Make sure the provider will be able to provide the level of care that your child requires. Make sure that you understand what areas you will be responsible for (i.e. stocking up on necessary food and medical supplies).

Make sure that you know how to contact the agency when you have an emergency. Find out how quickly they will be able to respond in an emergency situation.

How long will emergency respite care be provided?

Each request for emergency respite care will be reviewed individually. Therefore, there is no set number of hours that can be authorized. The Case Manager will review the child's and family's situation and will approve enough emergency respite care for each situation.

How much emergency respite care can I get in a year?

Remember that Health Choice only covers emergency respite care. There is no set number of respite hours per year. Each request for emergency respite care is reviewed individually. Requests for emergency respite care during a true emergency will not be denied just because you have already used emergency respite care during the year.

What do I do when there is an emergency and I need emergency respite care?

When emergency respite care is needed, the family or provider should contact the Case Manager at 1-800-753-3224 to receive approval.

This line is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The Case Manager will review the child's and family's situation and will consider a number of factors, including the impact the child's condition has on a parent's ability to cope and on their ability to provide care. The Case Manager will consider the appropriateness of the service request and treatment plan and will provide approval for emergency respite care as appropriate.

What do I do if I request emergency respite care and my request is denied?

If you call to request emergency respite care and your request is denied by the Case Manager, you may ask to speak with the Supervisor. He or she will ask for additional information about your situation and will make a decision regarding your request for emergency respite care.

How will our emergency respite provider be paid?

The respite care provider agency will keep track of the hours of emergency respite care provided to your family. Health Choice will reimburse the agency for the approved time. There is no cost to you and no co-payment required for emergency respite care.

How do we enforce family “rules”?

In order for the respite experience to be a smooth and pleasant one for the entire family, consideration needs to be given to the establishment of “house rules” regarding the home, the child, and the parents themselves. You should communicate your ‘house rules’ to the respite care provider before an emergency occurs. You may want to keep this information in a written care plan, so that a new provider coming into the home will know what is expected. (See page 12 for a sample care plan.) Here are some items to consider:

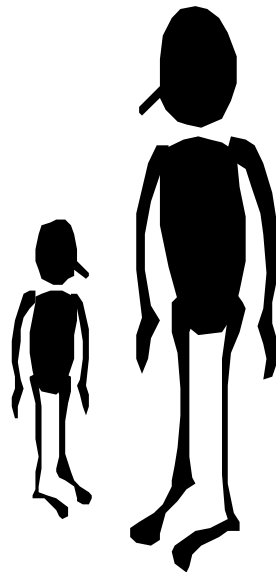
- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Respite Worker | <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Parking◆ Access to family home◆ Storage of personal belongings◆ Meals◆ Smoking◆ Television/radio◆ Telephone◆ Visitors |
| Child | <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Routines, nap time◆ Mealtime/snacks◆ Selection of clothing◆ Discipline issues◆ Homework◆ Chores of child◆ Areas off-limits to play◆ Acceptable outside play areas◆ Names of friends who can visit◆ Amount of television viewing (hours per day and acceptable shows)◆ Number of telephone calls and length |
| Parents | <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Communication with respite worker◆ Privacy |
| Home | <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Areas off-limits to pets |

How do we know if the emergency respite care my child receives is good?

Agencies that provide respite care should have guidelines for the provision of services to families of children with disabilities or chronic illnesses. Guidelines for care delivery, along with minimum qualifications for respite workers, help to ensure that children are receiving high quality care.

If you have questions or if the emergency respite care your child receives is not what you expected, talk with the respite care provider agency. Be specific in addressing what you expect from the respite worker and make sure this information is included in your care plan. The care plan can be changed at any time.

If the agency cannot meet the needs of your child, you may want to consider changing respite care provider agencies. Call the Health Choice Special Needs Helpline at 1-800-737-3028 for help identifying respite care provider agencies in your area.



TIPS FOR MAKING THINGS WORK

1. Establish a care plan for your child. Include information about the medications they receive, any allergies they have, their likes and dislikes, and anything else that would help someone else care for your child. Keep one copy of the plan on file with your respite care provider agency and keep another copy at home. Make sure to update the plan as changes occur.
2. Keep a list of important phone numbers handy. Include
 - ◆ The Health Choice Case Manager,
1-800-753-3224
 - ◆ The Respite Care Provider Agency
 - ◆ Your child's medical provider
3. If your child needs special food or medical supplies, be sure to keep enough on hand to last if an emergency should occur.
4. Keep the lines of communication between your family and the respite care provider agency open. Keep them informed of major changes in your child's condition and keep your care plan updated. Let the agency know when their service has been especially helpful. This will make it easier to talk about areas you want them to work on.

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Registration and Approval
for Emergency Respite Care

1-800-753-3224
1-919-941-1007 (fax)

To help with your questions about emergency respite care or other benefits for children with special needs under NC Health Choice, a toll-free Helpline is available Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

NC Health Choice Helpline

1-800-737-3028

Information you share will remain confidential just as anything you share with your health care provider would be.



**NC Health Choice for Children
Sample Care Plan**

**INFORMATION FOR
EMERGENCY RESPITE CARE WORKERS**

Child's Name _____ Age _____

Address _____

Phone number _____

Name and phone of family doctor _____

Hospital name and phone number _____

Poison Control phone number _____

Phone number where the parents can be reached _____

Cell phone or pager number(s) for parents _____

Any allergies or special medical information for children _____

TIPS FOR TAKING CARE OF MY CHILD

❖ What is special about my child: _____

❖ My child's schedule:

MORNING _____

AFTERNOON _____

EVENING _____

FEEDING

◆ Meal times
Breakfast _____ Lunch _____ Dinner _____

◆ Special Instructions _____

SLEEP HABITS AND NAP TIME _____

❖ Likes and dislikes: _____

✦ Play activities _____

✦ Favorite/Special toys _____

Inside areas off-limits to play _____

Acceptable outside play areas _____

Acceptable visitors/playmates _____

❖ Special things that comfort my child: _____

❖ Handling

Special instructions for bath time _____

Transporting _____

❖ Discipline _____

❖ Special equipment _____

❖ Communication strategies _____

❖ Things to think about when selecting and adapting new activities:

WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM THE RESPITE WORKER DURING EMERGENCY RESPITE CARE

1. Meal preparation and feeding _____
2. Cleanup (e.g. meal and snack, toy pickup, etc.) _____

3. Supervision of my child _____
4. Visitors: It _____ is / _____ is not all right to have visitors while I am gone.
5. Telephone use: It _____ is / _____ is not all right to use the telephone, other than for emergencies, while I am gone.

Other Important House Rules:

NC Health Choice for Children

ELIGIBILITY FOR EMERGENCY RESPITE CARE

Purpose: To be eligible for Emergency Respite Care under NC Health Choice for children, a child must meet the legislative definition of 'child with special needs'. The purpose of this form is to assist in the determination that a child meets the clinical criteria so that he or she may be registered as eligible for emergency respite care.

Child's Name: _____ DOB: _____

Child's SS#: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Name of Physician providing information: _____

Please Print

I confirm that the above-named child has been diagnosed with: _____

In my opinion, this diagnosis meets the criteria of at least one of the following categories: (check all that apply)

- ☐ Birth Defect (including genetic, congenital or acquired disorders)
- ☐ Developmental Disability
- ☐ Mental or Behavioral Disorder
- ☐ Chronic or Complex Illness

In my opinion, this (these) condition(s) will: (all must be checked for eligibility to be approved)

- ☐ Continue Indefinitely
- ☐ Interfere with Daily Routine
- ☐ Require Extensive Medical Intervention and
- ☐ Extensive Family Management

Physician's signature: _____ Date: _____

Phone Number: _____

Mail to: Case Manager, PO Box 12438, RTP, NC 27709-2438



North Carolina
Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Public Health • Women's and Children's Health Section
A. Dennis McBride, MD, MPH, State Health Director

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1,500 copies of this public document were printed at a cost of \$537.65 or \$.36 per copy. 08/00

